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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 001410

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: ALGERIAN VIEWS ON LONDON BOMBINGS

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (C) Algerians, judging from comments made to Embassy staff, press commentaries and other press reporting since the London bombings of July 7, have drawn three main conclusions about these terrorist attacks. First, the bombings should come as no surprise and were a natural consequence of the United Kingdom's sheltering of Islamist terrorist elements over recent years, despite Algeria's provision of information about specific individuals linked to Algerian terrorist groups. Second, if the West wants to end terrorism, it must address the core causes of Muslims' grievances, namely the Palestinian situation and the continued violence in Iraq. Third, many innocent Muslims living abroad -- especially those in Britain -- will suffer for the acts of a malignant few.

2. (C) We note that many Algerians continue to believe that the West recognized the dangers of terrorism only after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington. Having felt abandoned by the West (and by the Arab World) before 9/11, Algerians view these most recent attacks as a natural consequence of British failure to get tough on terrorism sooner, along with ongoing British and U.S. intervention in Iraq, and what is perceived as inattentiveness in Western capitals to resolving the Palestinian issue. That Algerians living in Britain and elsewhere may suffer guilt by association from the bombings in London further underscores Algerians' continued sense of alienation, frustration, and victimization. (End summary and comment.)

BOMBINGS SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A SURPRISE

3. (C) In remarks over dinner with DCM July 10, retired Colonel Mohammed Tabet, military attache to the Algerian Embassy in Washington during the height of Algeria's 1990s decade of terrorism, said the GOA had been telling the British Government for years that the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and Armed Islamic Group (GIA) members granted asylum during this time period in the United Kingdom were very dangerous. He commented that it was common practice for extremists wanted in Algeria to raise money for terrorist causes in London's Hyde Park. The colonel noted that Britain had not been alone in pursuing lenient policies toward terrorists. He mentioned the case of Anouar Haddam, a former professor and Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) spokesman, who was granted asylum by the U.S., where he continues to live. Haddam, said Tabet, was perhaps best known for regretting the deaths of innocents in the bombing of civilian targets, but justifying them as a necessary price and consequence of the Islamic struggle in Algeria.

4. (U) In a public statement carried in July 10 press reports, Algerian Police Commander Ali Tounsi accused Britain of "leniency toward Algerian terrorists," claiming there was an effective agreement between the British and members of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) residing in Britain, which "gave terrorists the opportunity to promote, in London parks, armed activities perpetrated in Algeria, as long as they did not engage in violence on British soil." Tounsi's remarks gave credence to the widespread belief here that Britain had reaped the seeds it had sown in adhering to a lenient policy toward Islamic extremists. Tounsi underscored this by pointing out that the British "should have expected blasts of such magnitude."

5. (C) Continuing on this theme, one FLN member of parliament privately told us: "What happened in London is dramatic, but did the English consider the risks of allowing 'Londonstan' to develop? Was giving shelter to terrorists a good solution? The British thought that sheltering terrorists was a good solution, but they did not realize that one can never align oneself with the devil, and they did precisely that for years and years."

ROOT CAUSES LIE IN IRAQ AND PALESTINE

6. (U) In a July 9 editorial, the French-language daily L'Expression summed up the view of many Algerians:

"...Religious extremism, which...is not the expression of a nation, even less of the Muslim nations, is the desperate manifestation of a feeling of humiliation and a perceptible Western contempt toward the two major issues for Muslims, Palestine and Iraq...." A separate July 10 editorial in the leading French-language daily El Watan stuck up the same theme: "...Islamists...feed the violence against innocent civilians on five continents. The first (issue employed) is the Palestinian issue. Young Arabs and Muslims are scandalized by the injustice that has been done to the Palestinian people....(Second,) the invasion of Iraq by the Americans is going to give new strength to Islamist terrorism. There the latter will find a new pretext to mobilize young people who are disappointed, marginalized, and without points of reference....(Last,) the absence of democracy in the Arab world is another factor that contributes to the emergence of fundamentalism. The Arab regimes have set up systems that stifle all freedoms. The only places they are not managing to control are the mosques."

ALGERIANS ABROAD WILL SUFFER FOR THE ACTS OF A FEW

17. (U) The mother of a young Algerian living illegally in London told us: "It's terrible to think about what happened because hundreds of Algerians who aren't in Britain legally will live a nightmare. I am truly afraid that a massive wave of Algerian expulsions is about to occur (in Britain)." A young physician, commenting to us that many Algerians had left Paris for London because it was so much easier to find affordable housing in the British capital, said, "Now Britain will be closed to us. These terrorists ended the dreams of many young Algerians who wanted to try the English adventure."

ERDMAN